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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001278

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/13/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES HOLDS SPECIAL SESSION  
IN DEFIANCE OF TERRORIST ATTACK

REF: BAGHDAD 1272

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Classified By: Classified by: Acting DCM Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.  
4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: In special session April 13, the Council of Representatives stood together with other GoI notables in defiance of the terrorist attack of the previous day. Many members attended in spite of formidable security hassles which made arrival at the assembly hall problematic. Some waited over two hours beside a street near a checkpoint, swapping information on the previous day's events, sharing concerns about keeping the Council on schedule, and mingling across sectarian lines. Speaker Mashadani chaired the televised session, in which speakers emphasized the common fight for Iraq's future. They also collectively mourned the passing of one of their number. Security was tight. The session closed with a commitment to maintain the regular legislative schedule and convene again on April 14. End summary.

12. (SBU) The Speaker of the Council of Representatives (CoR) called an extraordinary session on Friday, April 13, to meet in the same building that was hit by an apparent suicide bomber the previous day and thereby show that Iraq's democracy will not be stopped by terror. (The attack hit in the cafeteria, immediately adjacent to the CoR chamber, but the chamber itself was intact.) The session was called for 11:00 a.m. on a weekend (Friday), which is in itself extraordinary.

13. (C) Many members attempting to travel to the CoR were initially unable to transit the U.S. checkpoint (internal checkpoint in the International Zone) due to new and immediate security threats, which caused a delay of about two hours while suspicious items were detonated by EOD teams. As many as 30 or 40 CoR members assembled in the shade along the side of a street; discussion focused on the events of the previous day and the need to stand up to terror. Members were congregated in informal groupings that did not appear to be party-specific; the collegial nature of the impromptu gathering itself was in some measure evidence of a desire to come together in defiance of terror. Both members who were in the building during the explosion, and many who had already departed, were in the group. Other members were already assembled at the CoR, either having crossed the checkpoint prior to the security scare, resident in the Al Rasheed Hotel near the venue, or having crossed into the

International Zone on foot through another checkpoint. Both the show of solidarity and the willingness to endure an uncomfortable commute (and long wait) bear testimony to a commitment to make today's session meaningful.

¶4. (SBU) The session was chaired by Speaker Mashadani, with his two deputies at his side. Vice President Adel Abd al-Mahdi was in attendance, as was Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, leading Mashadani to remark that Iraq's "three presidencies" stood together in this battle against terror. The televised session included remarks from over a dozen representatives of the various political blocs, most expressing sentiments of solidarity and unity (although the Sadrists took yet another opportunity to place blame for Iraq's troubles on "occupation forces"). National Security Advisor al-Rubaie noted that the war on terror requires a long-term commitment. MoI Minister Bolani also attended. The assembly of 130 or more participants reportedly included over 100 CoR members from a cross section of all parties, together mourning the loss of the one confirmed death among their number, Mohammed Awad from the Hewar bloc. At the close of the session, Mashadani called for another regular session of the CoR the following day, April 14 (as had been announced at the close of the April 12 session and which would keep the CoR on its regular schedule).

¶5. (C) The CoR building generally is filled with dust and broken glass, which had been swept aside but not cleaned out before the April 13 session. Members were reminded of the explosive impact of the bomb and were able to view from behind security tape the clutter of the cafeteria, the central part of which had a tangle of chairs indicating the likely center of the blast. In spite of many clear reminders of the incident, including glass, dust, bent partitions, a few pieces of marble torn from the foyer's facade, and spots on the walls and ceiling, the building does not appear to be

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structurally damaged. With sufficient resources and effort, cleanup would seem possible in a short period of time -- although for the moment the area appeared to be preserved as a crime scene.

¶6. (C) Security at the CoR was very tight. After thorough searches at the U.S. checkpoint, all vehicles were required to park well away from the Convention Center and members walked to the venue. Prior to entry, all cell phones were confiscated, even for members of Parliament. The Ministry of Interior was clearly in charge of building security, and would not even permit personal staff of MP's into the facility. Metal detectors were as thorough as a major U.S. airport, with watches and belts removed to pass into the building itself. PolOffs were admitted but requested not to move around the building without an escort.

¶7. (C) Comment: The CoR's (and the GoI's) immediate response to this act of terror is encouraging, as they stand in solidarity against their attackers. Today's attendance was also encouraging, yet it remains to be seen whether a quorum (138 of the 275 members) will assemble for upcoming sessions -- compounded by the challenge of balancing imminent security threats (as were observed at the checkpoint today) and high attendance. End comment.

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